

# Howard County Council extends fee waivers to support Ellicott City flood recovery



Main Street in Ellicott City on Monday, August 1, 2016. (Jen Rynda / Baltimore Sun Media Group)



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Howard County Times

JANUARY 5, 2017, 10:56 AM

**R**esidents, business owners and property owners affected by last year's flood in Ellicott City will not have to pay certain permit and licensing fees through the end of June after the Howard County Council voted unanimously Tuesday to extend fee waivers.

The waivers, which were set to expire by the end of December, were extended to nearly a year from when the July 30, 2016 flood gutted dozens of businesses and displaced residents.

Proposed by Councilman Jon Weinstein, who represents the Ellicott City area, the waiver is intended to continue to provide relief to residents and owners affected by **the flood**.

"This will ensure that those continuing to rebuild in the aftermath of the flood are not burdened by permitting fees and can put their funds towards rebuilding and recovery instead," Weinstein wrote in a statement.

The waiver covers permits for fire protection, building and grading; as well as fees for electricity, plumbing, heating, ventilation and water and sewer services.

The flood caused a reduction in economic activity of nearly \$67 million and decreased the county government's revenue by around \$1.3 million, according to an economic impact study by the Howard County Economic Development Authority and Jacob France Institute at the University of Baltimore.

Weinstein said it was necessary to help businesses cope with the extent of the damage and the difficulty of reconstruction. The council originally approved the fee waiver in August, but it was set to expire on Dec. 31.

As of late last year, more than \$6,000 in permit fees have been waived.

As rebuilding continues, the county will work with property owners to develop better ways to flood-proof their buildings.

The county's Department of Public Works will hold a public meeting this month with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to discuss ideas.

The Corps of Engineers plans to provide recommendations on how to flood-proof buildings on Ellicott City's Main Street. The report will be completing by the fall.

"We need to keep working on how to prevent flood damage in the future, especially in Ellicott City," wrote Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman in a statement. "While we can't promise flooding will never happen again, we can take steps to minimize the impact."

The Public Works meeting is scheduled for 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Jan. 18, in the Columbia/Ellicott City room of the George Howard building in Ellicott City.

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